

Integration of Components of Linguaging into Tertiary Language Education

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Abstract

Development of sustainable society is generated via innovation that is promoted by languaging in tertiary language education. The paradigm shift from what students can do with the language (Rimšāne, 2010, 9) to why students use the language requires integration of components of languaging to be considered in the tertiary language processes and environments. The aim of the present research is to analyse integration of components of languaging into tertiary language education for the enhancement of students' communicative competence. The present research involves analysis of the key concepts "language education", "language", "languaging", "social interaction", "cognitive activity" and "efficiency". The empirical study is aimed at examining efficiency of English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of languaging for the enhancement of students' communicative competence by means of qualitative evaluation research. The present empirical study was carried out in the *English for Academic Purposes* course within Baltic Summer School *Technical Informatics and Information Technology* held at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Vilnius, Lithuania, July 20-August 4, 2013. The findings of the research allow drawing the conclusions that English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of languaging for the enhancement of student engineers' communicative competence is efficient. Directions of further research are proposed as well.

Keywords

Language Education; Languaging; Social Interaction; Cognitive Activity; Efficiency

Introduction

The contemporary social and economic situation in the European Union is characterized by a number of problems such as lack of working places due to the structural problems, high unemployment rate, migration of highly qualified young people and low rate of self-employees (Bassus, Wolfgramm, 2009, 36).

The promotion of the economic growth of the European Union is generated via innovation which is considered as an engine of economic development with a strong impact on the sustainable development in the European Union.

Innovation is closely inter-related with language - innovation is based on creativity (Lifelong Learning for Creativity and Innovation, 2008, 5), and language development and learning are creative processes (Ilyinska, 2004, 92). Hence, the dynamic inter-relationship between innovation and language advances the development of innovative products, processes and services in the European economy. This requires the integration of components of languaging into language education to be considered in tertiary language processes and environments.

Language has already attracted a lot of research efforts. The results of research activities demonstrate diversity in terms of scientific and theoretical fundamentals as well as complexity of prevailing concepts and current practical applications. However, many researchers agree that language plays a significant role in society: "the key to the evolution of human consciousness and society lies in the linguistic mediation of consciousness" (Lee, 1987, 104).

The aim of the present research is to analyse integration of components of languaging into tertiary language education for the enhancement of students' communicative competence.

Materials and Methods

The research question is as follows: how are components of languaging integrated to promote the enhancement of students' communicative competence?

The methodological background of the present research is based on the System-Constructivist theory

introduced as the New or Social Constructivism Pedagogical theory. The System-Constructivist theory implies the dialectical principle of the unity of opposites that contributes to the understanding of the relationship between external (social, social interaction, teaching, etc) and internal (individual, cognitive activity, learning, etc) perspectives as the synthesis of external and internal perspectives. In comparison, the Constructivism theory focuses on learning and, consequently, the internal perspective, the Social Constructivist theory –on teaching and, consequently, the external perspective as well as on the balance between teaching and learning and, consequently, the balance between the external and internal perspectives. The System-Constructivist theory and, consequently, the System-Constructivist approach to learning introduced by Reich (Reich, 2005) emphasize that human being's point of view depends on the subjective aspect: everyone has his/her own system of external and internal perspectives (Ahrens, Zašcerinska, 2010, 182) that is a complex open system (Rudzinska, 2008, 366), and experience plays core role in the knowledge construction process (Maslo, 2007, 39). Therein, the subjective aspect of human being's point of view is applicable to the present research.

Theoretical Framework

The present part of the contribution focuses on the definitions of language education, languaging and integration of components of languaging into tertiary language education.

Language Education

Language education is part of tertiary studies as demonstrated in Figure 1.

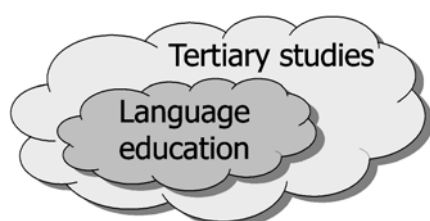


FIG. 1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TERTIARY STUDIES AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Language education or the languages of education is an overarching concept for language as a subject, language across the curriculum and foreign languages (Aase, 2006, 4) as depicted in Figure 2.

Language education is formed by a stable understanding of the unity of all language (Robbins, 2007, 49) - language as a subject, language across the

curriculum and foreign languages. These languages are linked, united in various ways, forming a whole (Robbins, 2007, 51). Hence, English for Academic Purposes is part of language as shown in Figure 3.

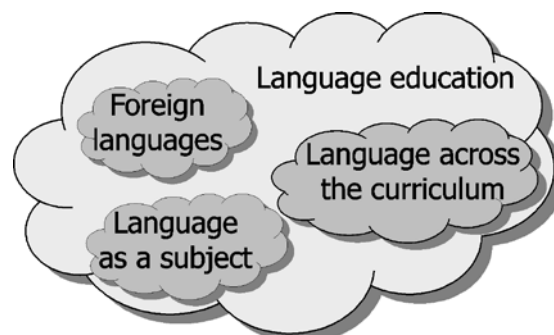


FIG. 2 COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION

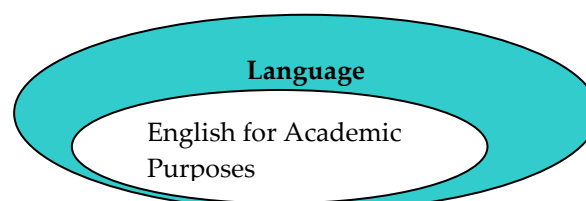


FIG. 3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

Languaging and Its Components

Languaging is the language process. Languaging is initially defined as the social practices that are actions performed by our meaning-making selves (Garcia, 2009, 39). The terms “social practice” and “activity” are used synonymously in the present contribution. The *activity* concept is originated with Vygotsky (Blunden, 2009, 10), although the Activity theory is associated with the name of Leontyev rather than Vygostky. Leontyev made a distinction between the individual *action*, and the social *activity* of which it is a part (Leont'ev, 1978, 7) and which gives it meaning (Blunden, 2009, 10). Therein, languaging based on the Activity theory by Leontyev (Leont'ev, 1978, 7) comprises use of terms such as *use of language*, *language activity*, *studies* and *process*. The terms “use”, “activity”, “studies” and “process” should be used synonymously. Thus, English for Academic Purposes studies are part of languaging as presented in Figure 4.

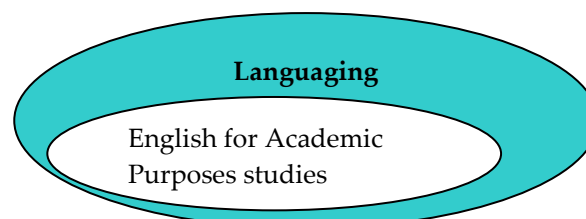


FIG. 4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGING AND ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES STUDIES

Languaging based on the *activity* concept (Leont'ev,

1978, 7) is further analysed within Vygotsky's Law of Development or interiorization (Vygotsky, 1934/1962, 89) in order to determine components of languaging. Law of Development has been defined by Vygotsky as transformation of the external culture into the individual internal (Wells, 1994, 3) meaning that any function in the individual cultural development appears twice or on two planes (Wells, 1994, 3): first, on the social level and later, on the individual level. The social level accentuates social interaction of development (Surikova 2007, 36). Therein, social interaction is defined as the unity of outside developmental circumstances and individual psychological characteristics in student experience (Surikova, 2007, 254). The individual level focuses on cognitive activity (Surikova 2007, 36). Cognitive activity refers to the unity of processes of sense, perception, attention, memory, thinking, speech and imagination, by which people perceive, remember, think, speak, and solve problems. In other words, any function in the individual cultural development appears at the beginning between people (as interpsychical or intermental category), and then – on the intrinsic level (as intrapsychical or intramental category) (Wells, 1994, 3). Hence, the components of languaging are social interaction and cognitive activity (Zaščerinska, 2009, 150) as depicted in Figure 5.

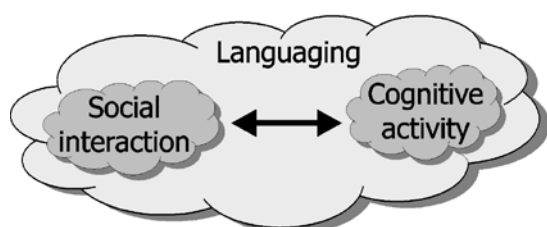


FIG. 5 COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE

The newly determined components of languaging allow re-defining of languaging by Garcia (Garcia, 2009, 39). Thus, based on the definition of English for Academic Purposes activity (Zaščerinska, 2010a, 213), languaging is defined as according to certain common norms, over some period of time, shared aim oriented joint activity that provides joint social interaction and cognitive activity for each participant and increases opportunities of gaining social experience.

Integration of Components of Languaging

Integration in the present research is defined as the process that unites its components. Integration of components of languaging is based on Vygotsky's Law of Development or interiorization (Vygotsky, 1934/1962, 89) described in the theoretical part of the

present contribution. Hence, integration of components of languaging proceeds in three following phases (Zaščerinska, Ahrens, 2010, 184) as shown in Figure 6: from the social perspective or teaching in Phase 1 through the phase of the unity of social and individual perspectives or peer-learning in Phase 2 to the individual perspective or learning in Phase 3.

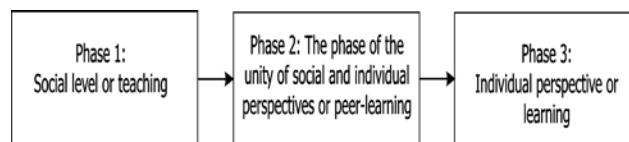


FIG. 6 INTEGRATION OF COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE

Thus, integration of components of languaging is implemented in the following phases of English for Academic Purposes studies in a certain sequence:

- in the first phase (teaching) educator-student interaction is based on educator's academic knowledge and students' practical communicative experience,
- in the second phase (peer-learning) students' communicative competence develops through students' mutual interaction based on knowledge variety provided by every student individually,
- in the third phase (learning) development of students' communicative competence in students' autonomous cognitive activity is based on every student's individual knowledge acquired by the student and development of students' communicative competence to optimal or high level.

Empirical Study

The present part of the contribution reveals the research design, survey results and findings of the empirical study.

Research Design

The research design includes the research purpose, question and methodology as well as the description of respondents.

The research question is as follows: have English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of languaging been efficient for the enhancement of students' communicative competence? Checking the efficiency of pedagogic interventions and organizational changes in complex and constantly self-regenerating environments (Kardoff, 2004, 137) employs the qualitative evaluation research (Flick,

2004, 149). Hence, the qualitative evaluation research has been used in the present empirical study. The qualitative evaluation research has been aimed at examining efficiency of English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of languaging for the enhancement of students' communicative competence. Therein, efficiency involves two elements, namely, quality and effectiveness as depicted in Figure 7.



FIG. 7 ELEMENTS OF EFFICIENCY

Quality of English for Academic Purposes studies is regarded as the improvement of students' communicative competence (Zaščerinska, 2011, 126). In turn, effectiveness means the educator's contribution to the students' communicative competence, namely, provision of social interaction and cognitive activity in the implementation of English for Academic Purposes studies (Zaščerinska, 2011, 126-127). English for Academic Purposes studies is efficient if the inputs (English for Academic Purposes studies) produce the maximum output (students' communicative competence) (Zaščerinska, 2010b, 3) (European Commission, 2006, 2). Therein, students' communicative competence is the outcome criterion of efficiency of English for Academic Purposes studies (Zaščerinska, 2010b, 3).

The qualitative evaluation research has proceeded (Zaščerinska, 2011, 109) from the phase of exploration of the context analysis, through the description of the practice and to the phase of generalization of the model. The phase of exploration of the context analysis of the qualitative evaluation research has been aimed at determining the present situation of English for Academic Purposes studies in promoting students' motivation and their readiness to implement the joint activity. The description of the practice has analysed differences in levels of features investigated. The phase of generalisation of the model has evaluated whether the implementation of English for Academic Purposes studies is efficient for the development of students' communicative competence. Evaluation in the qualitative evaluation research has proceeded (Zaščerinska, 2011, 109) from diagnostic evaluation to summative evaluation through formative evaluation, from self-evaluation to external evaluation through internal evaluation and from the context analysis to

evaluation through observation.

The present empirical study involved 16 respondents: two educators in the field of language pedagogy for the internal evaluation, four engineering students in the *English for Academic Purposes* course within Baltic Summer School *Technical Informatics and Information Technology* held at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Vilnius, Lithuania, July 20-August 4, 2013 for the case description and 10 researchers in the field of educational research from different countries for external evaluation. The qualitatively oriented research allows the construction of only few cases (Mayring, 2007, 1). Moreover, the cases themselves are not of interest, only the conclusions and transfers we can draw from this material (Mayring, 2007, 6). Selecting the cases for the case study comprises use of information-oriented sampling, as opposed to random sampling (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 229). This is because an average case is often not the richest in information. In addition, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 229).

Interpretative research paradigm that corresponds to the nature of humanistic pedagogy (Lūka, 2008, 52) has been used in the present empirical study. Moreover, interpretative paradigm is characterized by the researchers' practical interest in the research question (L. Cohen, L. Manion et.al., 2003).

The sample for the case description was composed of one female and three males. The age of the respondents differentiated from 22 to 35. All four students had got Bachelor Degree in different fields of computing. Working experience of the students was different, too. English was a foreign language for all the students in the group. The students' mother tongues that contributed to successful foreign language learning and became an instrument of bringing the students together more closely (Abasheva, 2010, 431) were as follows: Lithuanian for one student, Russian for two students and Belarusian for one student. The sample was multicultural as the students with different cultural backgrounds and diverse educational approaches from different countries, namely, Lithuania, Russia and Belarus, were chosen. That emphasized the study of individual contribution to the development of students' communicative competence within English for Academic Purposes studies (Lūka, Ludborza, Maslo, 2009, 5). Hence, the group's socio-cultural context (age, field of study and work,

language level, mother tongue) was heterogeneous.

Survey Results

The present part of the contribution described the pre-survey results, educator's contribution and the post-survey results.

The pre-survey and post-survey of the students' communicative competence in the *English for Academic Purposes* course comprised the following methods: self-evaluation of students' social experience in General English (a student him/herself), self-evaluation of students' social experience in Academic Native Language (a student him/herself), evaluation of students' social experience in English for Academic Purposes (English educators), self-evaluation of students' social experience in English for Academic Purposes (a student him/herself) and self-evaluation of students' social experience in Mother Tongue (a student him/herself). Self-evaluation and evaluation of students' social experience involved such 12 constructs as six constructs of experience of social interaction and six constructs of experience of cognitive activity (Zaščerinska, 2011, 119). Social interaction means (Zaščerinska, 2011, 19) that students participate in the activity, exchange ideas with others, co-operate with others, analyze a problem, are in the dialogue and search for problem solving tools together with others. In its turn, cognitive activity proceeds while the student (Maslo, 2007, 41) regulates his/her own learning process, sets his/her own goals, takes responsibility for his/her own learning, works independently, evaluates his/her own learning process and continues to improve his/her own skills. The evaluation scale of six levels for each construct was given where "1" means "very low", "2" – "low", "3" – "critical", "4" – "average", "5" – "optimal" and "6" – "high" level of the communicative competence. In the pre-survey the average coefficient of experience of social interaction of three students was of a lower level than the average coefficient of experience of cognitive activity. The average coefficient of experience of social interaction of one student was of a higher level than the average coefficient of experience of cognitive activity. The pre-survey's results of the students' communicative competence in the *English for Academic Purposes* course allow drawing the conclusion that the low level of the students' communicative competence dominated in the English for Academic Purposes group. Baltic Summer School *Technical Informatics and Information Technology* provides the *English for Academic Purposes* course to facilitate students'

research success, to support preparation for international Ph.D. programmes in the European Union, to promote further specialization in the chosen field and learning in a simulated environment. It should be noted that the terms "English for Academic Purposes course" and "English for Academic Purposes studies" differ. English for Academic Purposes course is considered as a plan, programme, curriculum, etc. that includes aims, objectives, contents, teaching and learning process and evaluation as shown in Figure 8.

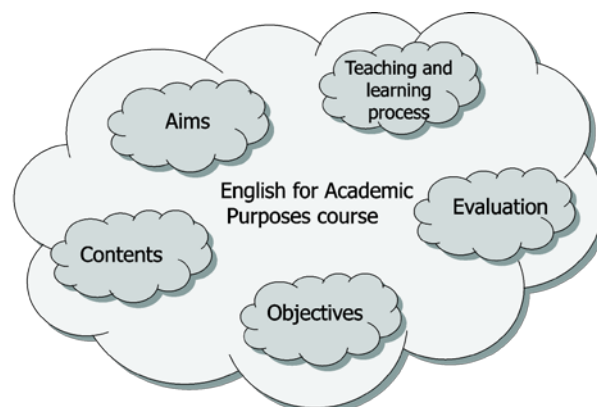


FIG. 8 ELEMENTS OF ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES COURSE

In turn, English for Academic Purposes studies are defined as a part of languaging, and the process of teaching and learning in the English for Academic Purposes course and, consequently, a part of the English for Academic Purposes course. The aim of the *English for Academic Purposes* course was to improve students' communicative competence in English for Academic Purposes for the participation in international research activities. The objectives of the implementation of English for Academic Purposes studies in the *English for Academic Purposes* course were to widen students' social experience, namely, experience in social interaction and cognitive activity. English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of languaging were implemented in three phases (Zaščerinska, 2011, 105-106). Phase 1 *Teaching* was aimed at a safe environment for all the students. In order to provide a safe environment, the essence of constructive social interaction and its organizational regulations were considered by the educator and students. The present phase was organized to involve the students' participation. Phase 2 *Peer-Learning* was designed for the students' analysis of an open academic problem situation and their search for a solution. The same materials were prepared for all of the group students. This phase involved the students to act in peers. Phase 3 *Learning* emphasized the students' self-regulation

with use of assessment on the process and self-evaluation on the results.

In the post-survey the average coefficient of experience of social interaction of three students was of a higher level than the average coefficient of experience of cognitive activity. And the average coefficient of experience of social interaction of one student coincided with the average coefficient of experience of cognitive activity. In order to determine the developmental dynamics of average coefficient of each student's social experience, comparison of the pre-survey and post-survey results of average coefficient of the students' social experience was carried out. The comparison revealed that average coefficient of the students' social experience had increased to all four students. The summary of average coefficient of each construct of the students' social experience in the English for Academic Purposes group and levels of the students' communicative competence showed that 12 constructs of social experience had been improved. Then, the summary of the results of frequency revealed that the level of all the students' communicative competence has enriched as demonstrated in Figure 9. In Figure 9 the vertical numbers mean six levels of communicative competence, the horizontal numbers present the code number of the students who participated in the pre- and post-surveys, Code CC1 shows the pre-survey's results of the students' communicative competence and Code CC2 shows the post-survey's results of the students' communicative competence.

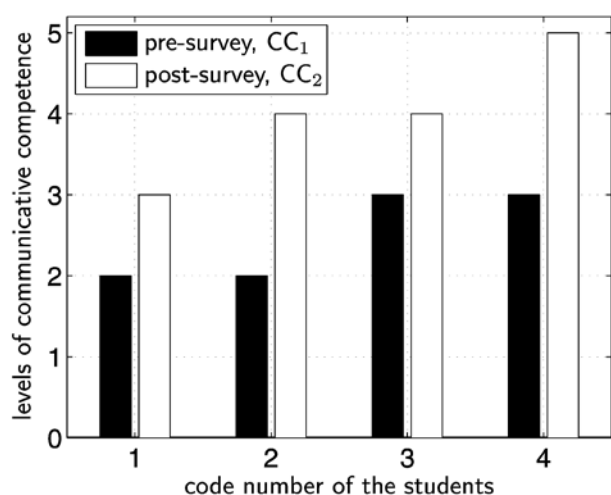


FIG. 9 INTER-CONNECTIONS OF THE PRE-SURVEY AND POST-SURVEY BETWEEN LEVELS OF EACH STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The post-survey's results of the students' communicative competence allow drawing the conclusion that the average level of the students'

communicative competence dominated in the English for Academic Purposes group. Hence, considering judgment to be part of the art of statistics (Gigerenzer, 2004, 603), the conclusion has been drawn that English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of languaging positively influenced the development of the students' communicative competence demonstrated by the difference between the levels of the students' communicative competence in the pre- and post-survey.

Findings of the Study

The present part of the contribution described the analysis of the students' self-evaluation of the research results, internal and external evaluation of the research results.

In order to find out how each student's communicative competence has changed after the implementation of English for Academic Purposes studies, analysis of the students' self-evaluation of the communicative competence comprised the structured interviews of three questions, namely, 1. What is your attitude to the English for Academic Purposes studies? 2. What have you learned in the English for Academic Purposes studies? 3. How can you apply this knowledge in your professional field? The aim of the interviews was to reveal the students' evaluation of English for Academic Purposes studies for the development of their communicative competence. Comparing the answers of those four students in the sample, the structured interviews are focused on the students' positive experience in the development of their communicative competence. Thus, a student emphasized the synergy between social interaction and cognitive activity: "It was good to hear and learn other students' points of views". Most of the student's expressions on the positive experience in cognitive activity were associated with the codes of the meta-code *experience of cognitive activity*, however, further differentiation between the suggested codes, namely, student regulates his/her own learning process, student sets his/her own goals, student takes responsibility for his/her own learning, student works independently, student evaluates his/her own learning process and continues to improve his/her own skills, is difficult: "It was interesting to receive and work through the given materials", "There were two humour dialogues which I personally liked very much", "I received info that will help me to structure my research in a better way". The student evaluated

his/her own learning process determined as a code of the meta-code *experience of cognitive activity*: “I learned the structure and formal definitions for doing research.” This student continued to improve his/her own skills outlined as a code of the meta-code *experience of cognitive activity*: “We have also spoken how to organize my master thesis”, “I want to get a BaSoTi certificate and find out the ways for future development”. Summarising content analysis (Mayring, 2004, 269) of the structured interviews demonstrated that English for Academic Purposes studies promote the development of students’ communicative competence. Moreover, English for Academic Purposes studies contributed to the safe and friendly teaching/learning environment for all the participants and provide opportunities of constructive social interaction and cognitive activity.

Internal evaluation involves internal evaluators, namely, students and educators of the educational establishment (Hahele, 2005, 37). Analysis of the internal evaluation of the students’ communicative competence comprised the data processing, analysis, interpretation and analysis of the results of the pre-survey and post-survey of four students. The *Mean* results of the descriptive statistics showed that the level of the students’ communicative competence has positively changed as presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1 MEAN ANALYSIS OF THE PRE- AND POST-SURVEYS

Outcome criterion	Mean in the Pre-survey	Mean in the Post-survey
Students’ communicative competence	2,5	4,0

Hence, considering judgment to be part of the art of statistics (Gigenzer, 2004, 603), the conclusion has been drawn that English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of languaging positively influenced the development of the students’ communicative competence.



FIG. 10 CRITERIA OF CHOOSING EXPERTS FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The choice of experts was based on two criteria, namely, recognized knowledge in the research topic and absence of conflict of interests (Lopez, Salmeron, 2011, 202) as depicted in Figure 10.

The number of experts depends on the heterogeneity of the expert group: the greater the heterogeneity of the group, the fewer the number of experts (Okoli, Pawlovski, 2004, 20). Thus, 10 is a good number of experts for the study (Lopez, Salmeron, 2011, 202). Therein, the external evaluation comprised 10 researchers from different countries, thereby providing absence of conflict of interests for the present study. All the 10 researchers have decisively contributed to their fields of research. For example, the present research employs the finding of a researcher on the *quasi-concept*. The other investigates the use of external and internal perspectives in empirical studies, namely, the external perspective means viewing the world from the researcher’s or scientist’s view and the internal perspective – from the subject’s view. All the 10 researchers have got extensive experience in teaching through English for Academic Purposes. For example, three researchers provide teaching English for Academic Purposes to the students of educational sciences at tertiary level. Analysis of the external evaluation of the research results comprised the non-structured interview of one question as following: What is the researcher’s view on English for Academic Purposes studies for the development of students’ communicative competence? The aim of the non-structured interviews was to reveal the researchers’ evaluation of English for Academic Purposes studies for the development of students’ communicative competence. A researcher found the research on efficiency of English for Academic Purposes studies for development of students’ communicative competence to be “a very well conducted piece of research, which reaches some interesting conclusions. The analysis is comprehensive, and the conclusions are viable”. Summarising content analysis (Mayring, 2004, 269) of the data revealed that the respondents evaluate English for Academic Purposes studies for the development of students’ communicative competence positively. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that English for Academic Purposes studies enhance students’ communicative competence.

Conclusions

The findings of the research allow drawing the conclusions that English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of

language for the enhancement of students' communicative competence are efficient. Regarding quality assurance, it is evident that the students' communicative competence has been enriched. The students have gained their social experience for the development of their communicative competence, and thus social experience changed into the means of gaining new opportunities and advantages. Irrespective of levels in the students' initial language capacity and different combinations of languages, English for Academic Purposes studies has become an effective means of acquiring social experience by the students in order to improve their communicative competence, and resulted in the improved students' communicative competence. Therein, implementation of English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of language has contributed to the development of the students' communicative competence. Regarding effectiveness of the educator's contribution to the students' communicative competence, it is evident that the students have widened their experience in social interaction with the implementation of English for Academic Purposes studies. The students' social experience and attitude were positive indicating that the studies positively influence the students' communicative competence. Validity of the qualitative evaluation research has been provided by use of the mixed methods' approach to the data obtaining, processing and analysis. Validity and reliability of the research results have been provided by involving other researchers into several stages of the conducted research. External validity has been revealed by international co-operation. Therein, the researchers' positive evaluation of English for Academic Purposes studies for the development of students' communicative competence validates the findings of the present research.

The present research has *limitations*. The inter-connections between students' communicative competence, English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of language and the sequence of their implementation have been set. Another limitation is the empirical study conducted by involving educators and students of one tertiary institution. Therein, the results of the study cannot be representative for the tertiary area. Nevertheless, the results of the research - English for Academic Purposes studies based on the integration of components of language and the qualitative evaluation research design - may be used as a basis of

the development of students' communicative competence of other tertiary institutions.

Regarding further research directions, use of Web technologies within English for Academic Purposes studies for the development of students' communicative competence is of a common research interest. Empirical studies in other institutions are proposed to be carried out. A comparative research of different countries could be carried out, too.

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Published by Infonomics Society, London, UK, 2010.

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